

Episode 57DEH February 21 2025 The German SDP provided replacement renewable home heating systems

In Episode 57DEH 1A Germany Top German politicians and chancellor candidates in a final TV debate traded blows over topics such as The Russian invasion of Ukraine defense expenditures and healthcare 1B Germany Here is a look at what to expect for Sunday at the German Snap Elections and beyond 1C Germany The Trump February surprise roils German Elections 1D Germany All eyes on far right AfD in German election rocked by violence and US interference Extremists tipped for second place after shifting debate to immigration and crime and winning endorsements from Musk and Vance German election 2025 poll tracker The AfD attempt to link arms with the White House could backfire however Trump is not popular in Germany even many AfD supporters do not like him said a political scientist at the University of Mainz Main Content

1A Germany Top German politicians and chancellor candidates in a final TV debate traded blows over topics such as The Russian invasion of Ukraine defense expenditures and healthcare RAWSEP View The SDP provided replacement renewable heating systems in German homes and the CDU seeks to repeal the law Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization DW February 20 2025 From left to right: SPD General Secretary Matthias Miersch Greens Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock CDU General Secretary Carsten Linnemann and CSU parliamentary group leader Alexander Dobrindt It was the last time for the parties to make their case in a debate before election day on Sunday February 23 2025 Notably The German current foreign minister Annalena Baerbock represented the Greens at the debate rather than chancellor candidate Robert Habeck Billed as The Final Round the event aired with public broadcasters Debate participants touched on issues like The Russian invasion of Ukraine NATO conscription and healthcare policy US President The Trump attitude towards Ukraine and the NATO alliance was also brought up Until now the right wing opposition parties have been leading in the polls The CDU has hovered around 30% support and AfD is trailing them with around 20% Meanwhile incumbent Chancellor Olaf The Scholz center left Social Democratic Party SPD is polling in third place with 15% while their coalition partners the Green Party is coming in fourth with just over 13% The parties gave their takes on the climate crisis and how the country should approach energy policy Increasing energy costs in Germany Linnemann of the CDU criticized a heating law backed by the now fractured German governing coalition of the SPD FDP and Greens The law slowly replaces heating systems in German houses with those that consume mostly renewable energy Climate change takes back seat in the German 2025 election The CDU has criticized the heating law as being negative for people who own homes in Germany the CDU seek to repeal the legislation The AfD Alice Weidel criticized the German energy policy under former CDU Chancellor Angela Merkel who stepped down in 2021 However Weidel did not discuss her concrete approach to climate change Should mandatory conscription be brought back? Wesley Dockery As Germany grapples with The Russian invasion of Ukraine on one end and a NATO skeptical Trump on the other one idea under discussion is a return to compulsory military service Mandatory conscription in Germany was abolished in 2011 A draft law approved last year by SPD Chancellor Olaf The Scholz government asked young men to answer about their readiness to serve in the German military also known as the Bundeswehr The Christian Social Union CSU the Bavarian sister party of the CDU has called for a return to mandatory conscription Fact check: Is the defense budget of European countries bigger than the entire Russian state budget? The facts: The military budgets for NATO and Canada in 2023 and for Russia in 2023 were roughly even According to NATO figures from 2025 the total military expenditure of European NATO

countries and Canada was \$4293 billion €4089 billion in 2023 The Russian national budget for 2025 was passed in November 2024 According to media reports the expenditure will amount to the equivalent of roughly \$430 billion almost €12 billion higher than the planned revenue Estonia pledges to raise defense spending to 5% of GDP How do the parties view the challenges facing the German healthcare system? The party members were asked whether they believe private health insurance should be abolished in Germany They raised cards with either yes or no in response to the question Most people in Germany are on public health insurance provided by non profit sickness funds or Krankenkassen Those considered high earners who make above a certain amount have the option to change to private insurance The SPD and Greens are for the abolition of private health insurance The CDU and the AfD are against the idea The SPD representative at the debate Matthias Miersch said he wants patients who have mandatory public insurance to be treated the same when it comes to medical appointments as those who have private insurance

1B Germany Here is a look at what to expect for Sunday at the German Snap Elections and beyond **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization** February 20 2025 What happens on election day February 23 2025? Polls are due to open at 8 am and close at 6 pm Germans can also vote by postal ballot but their ballot must arrive by the time polling stations close on election day to be counted Exit polls will come and vote counting will begin immediately after voting ends and the general picture of the outcome should be clear very quickly A final official result is expected early Monday Who are the contenders? Four candidates are running to be the German next leader: incumbent Chancellor Olaf Scholz of the center left Social Democrats; Friedrich Merz the candidate of the mainstream conservative Christian Democratic Union party; current Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck of the environmentalist Greens; and Alice Weidel of the far right anti immigration Alternative for Germany or AfD Preelection polls have put the Merz Union bloc in the lead with support of about 30% ahead of AfD with around 20% The Scholz Social Democrats and the Green s of Habeck are further back Merz is favored to replace Scholz as chancellor but it is not yet clear what governing coalitions will be possible after the election All mainstream parties say they will not work with AfD What is up for grabs? At least 592 million people in a country of 84 million are eligible to vote for the new Bundestag or lower house of parliament It is the 630 member Bundestag that will elect the next chancellor the German equivalent of a prime minister There are 29 parties on the ballot but it is likely that between five and eight of them will get enough votes to win seats in parliament What happens after polls close? The German electoral system rarely gives any party an absolute majority and opinion polls suggest that no party is anywhere near one this time The country has no tradition of minority governments at national level which means that two or more parties will most likely form a coalition There is no formal referee for the process of forming a new government and no set time limit Parties hold exploratory talks to determine who they have most common ground with and one combination of parties then moves on to formal coalition talks Those negotiations typically produce a detailed coalition agreement setting out the new government plans That will typically need approval at least from conventions of the parties involved Some parties may choose to put it to a ballot of their entire membership Once that process is complete the Bundestag can elect the new chancellor What is at stake? A strong German government would be important to the response of Europe to the new US administration and to turmoil in Ukraine and elsewhere Germany and neighboring France have traditionally been the motor of the EU but both heavyweights have been consumed by domestic political instability in recent months Germany A political tidal wave is crashing across Germany That is what the hard right nationalist Alternative for Germany AfD party firmly believes **Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization** Reuters February 20 2025 For years Germany got used to being admired and envied as the economic powerhouse of Europe Vorsprung durch technik roughly

translating as progress through technology was an advertising slogan for Audi cars in the 1980s The country was seen as modern dynamic and technologically advanced And the automobile industry was one of the main arteries pumping wealth into the German economic heart But fundamental flaws have now been exposed in the German economic model One half of the Carola bridge in Dresden collapsed in September 2024 It is widely viewed as kaputt or broken relying too heavily on energy intensive old fashioned industries like combustion engine cars and the chemical industry During the 16 years of Angela Merkel as chancellor she stepped down in 2021 Germany became increasingly dependent on: exports to China cheap gas from Russia and a US defense umbrella Trump now says Europe can no longer rely on US security support and guarantees China has made rapid advances in the automobile industry and dominates electric car technology The Russian full scale invasion of Ukraine left Germany scrambling for alternative energy sources Buying liquid natural gas from the US and others is expensive leading to financial strain on many energy intensive German businesses As the biggest member of the eurozone currency that has an impact way beyond its borders The German military is also a source of irritation among European neighbors Berlin is a key power in the defense alliance Nato German Chancellor Olaf Scholz pledged a zeitenwende or a turning point for the German depleted military after The Russian full scale invasion of Ukraine Yet the German military remains in a debilitated state less battle ready than three years ago Partly due to its donations to Ukraine Germany has provided weapons that have been critical for The Ukrainian air defense Germany after the US has been the biggest donor of military aid to Ukraine and most political parties in Germany are in favour of continuing to support Kyiv More than 4000 bridges in Germany are broken German infrastructure has been quietly crumbling for years due to chronic under investment public and private Train punctuality in Germany is appalling worse than in the UK which will astound weary British commuters Digitization is lamentable Mobile phone reception is patchy outside cities and people are still known to use faxes! But even if recent German governments had wanted to invest more they faced legal limits on spending A debt brake was written into the German constitution following the financial crisis of 2008 to 2009 with a constraint on new debt of no more than 035% of GDP except in times of national emergency The euro currency which Germany depends on almost collapsed But what seemed to voters an anchor of financial stability then now appears to many a block to economic growth Rows about reforming the debt brake were the final straw leading to the collapse of the German outgoing coalition and the snap election this Sunday But new German government beware that breaking the debt brake will be no mean feat You need a two thirds majority in parliament to change the German constitution The German center left and center right have moved to the right in their rhetoric The post World War Two political system in Germany is designed so that no single party can dominate parliament as the Nazis did after they were first voted in in 1933 Coalition building is the name of the game And there has been a so called firewall in place since the end of World War Two a cross party consensus to keep the extreme right out of government The majority here still insists their country needs to be saved from AfD 1C Germany The Trump February surprise roils German Elections Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization Feb 20 2025 The German election set for February 23 has been coasting toward a predictable outcome since the collapse of Chancellor Olaf The Scholz three party coalition in December Friedrich Merz the center right leader of the opposition Christian Democrat CDU CSU remains comfortably ahead of his nearest rival the populist nationalist Alternative for Germany AfD In order to become chancellor Merz will have to form a coalition with either the center left SPD or the Greens or possibly both This outcome risks producing a new iteration of the unpopular fractious three party coalition led by Olaf Scholz The CDU CSU lead over AfD was 15% as recently as mid November; it may now be as low as 8 percentage points The first televised debate of the campaign held February 9 featured only Merz and Scholz whose SPD is now polling at about 16% Over

the course of the campaign neither The Scholz Social Democrats SPD nor the Greens led by Economy Minister Robert Habeck has gained much momentum as both parties bear responsibility for the weak economy Last week the Vance speech at the Munich Security Conference brought a shocking new focus on the viability of staying the course on Ukraine and on US commitments to European security raising the stakes in the German election The Vance critique of the German firewall was taken as an attempt to boost support for the AfD Both Scholz and SPD Defense Minister Pistorius reacted viscerally in Munich while Foreign Minister Baerbock contended that the US could yet be persuaded to revise its positions on a Ukraine settlement in particular on territorial concessions to Russia and NATO membership for Ukraine A German diplomat told Politico that Europe had received repeated wake up calls about the imperative to increase military capabilities but had kept hitting the snooze button Merz has recently come over toward the SPD position on relaxing the so called debt brake that has stood in the way of any substantial rise in defense spending in Germany This may be a small indication that the wake up call has at last been heard The final televised debate of the campaign on Feb 16 included all four of the leading candidates — Merz Scholz Robert Habeck Greens and AfD Alice Weidel Merz restated his support for sending German long range Taurus missiles to Ukraine and Scholz continued to oppose this Merz told Weidel that her neutral position on the Ukraine war would in his mind disqualify AfD from ever being in government Scholz harshly mocked AfD proposals for reviving the economy While clearly angry at the Vance remarks Scholz nevertheless has restated the German abiding imperative to avoid any breach between the US and NATO European members Germany traditionally more reliant on American defensive guarantees than nuclear armed Britain or France seems likely to reconcile itself to a proposed negotiated settlement so long as the outcome for Ukraine can be depicted as representing a foundation for its national survival and recovery Germany will accept burden shifting toward Europe in NATO in the interest of averting any open breach between the US and Europe in keeping with the German center right Atlanticist tradition The Paris summit convened on Feb 16 by Macron produced no consensus among Europeans on next steps The German election is unlikely to bring any unsettling surprise 1D Germany All eyes on far right AfD in German election rocked by violence and US interference Extremists tipped for second place after shifting debate to immigration and crime and winning endorsements from Musk and Vance German election 2025 poll tracker The AfD attempt to link arms with the White House could backfire however Trump is not popular in Germany even many AfD supporters do not like him said a political scientist at the University of Mainz Excerpts edited by RAWSEP for brevity and clarity and relationship to Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501c3 nonprofit organization The New York Times Feb 20 2025 Conservative opposition leader Friedrich Merz is expected to be elected chancellor Europe is looking to Germany for leadership I would sell the soul of the CDU if I went down such a path as alliance with the AfD frontrunner Merz insisted in a televised debate this week Chancellor Olaf Scholz whose Social Democrats are running in third place in the polls has called on voters to turn their backs on the AfD hailing the German good tradition since the Nazi era of rejecting the extreme right The far right had been relatively slow in gaining traction in Germany This was often attributed to the lessons drawn from the horrors of the Nazi period which were hardwired into the German Basic Law and passed on to generations of children in the 80 years since the second world war Musk however has endorsed AfD attempts to absolve Germany of enduring responsibility for the Holocaust condemning too much focus on past guilt The AfD attempt to link arms with the White House could backfire however Trump is not popular in Germany even many AfD supporters do not like him said a political scientist at the University of Mainz But analysts say the mainstream parties have only another few years to demonstrate they can address the fundamental concerns of voters or risk the far right coming out on top The centrist parties want to hold on to power even though they have driven the country into a wall said an AfD supporter in the eastern town of Schkeuditz